ISM Code and Ship Safety Management System: DPA Role, SMS Audits and Certification

1 – 5 November 2027
Barcelona - Eixample district four-star



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Introduction:

ISM Code failures rarely start with a missing manual; they start when the safety management system on paper no longer matches what crews do on deck, when the designated person ashore cannot reach top management, when non-conformities are closed without root cause and when internal audits sample the wrong ships. This Core Concept course gives DPAs, fleet managers, marine superintendents, masters and SMS auditors a working method to run, verify and improve an ISM Code safety management system across a fleet. Participants produce an SMS Gap Assessment and Internal Audit Plan for a case fleet.

Course Objectives:

- Interpret the ISM Code functional requirements and map each one to the documented procedures, records and responsibilities of a shipping company and its ships
- Operate the designated person ashore role, including monitoring of safety and pollution prevention, access to top management and escalation of shipboard concerns
- Define master responsibilities and overriding authority, resources and personnel requirements and familiarisation arrangements in the company safety management system
- Control shipboard operations, emergency preparedness drills, planned maintenance of critical equipment and SMS document revision across a fleet
- Report, investigate and close non-conformities, accidents and near misses with root cause analysis and corrective action verification
- Plan and conduct internal ISM audits, company verification and management review, and prepare ships and offices for DOC and SMC certification audits

Target Audience:

- Managers who hold or deputise for the designated person ashore duty and monitor fleet safety and pollution prevention
- Fleet and technical managers who allocate crews, budgets and maintenance resources to ships under a company safety management system
- Marine superintendents who attend ships, verify shipboard procedures and follow up inspection and audit findings
- Masters and senior officers who implement the safety management system on board and exercise overriding authority
- Safety, quality and SMS audit leads who plan internal audits, manage non-conformity records and prepare for certification audits

Course Outline:

Day 1: ISM Code Purpose, Structure and Company Safety Policy

- ISM Code Objectives: Safe Ship Operation, Injury Prevention and Pollution Prevention
- SOLAS Chapter IX Application to Company and Ship: Ship Types and Tonnage Scope
- ISM Code Functional Requirements and the Company Safety and Environmental Protection Policy
- Company Responsibilities and Authority: Organisation Chart, Ship Manager Declaration and Shore Reporting Lines
- Fleet SMS Current-State Self-Assessment Against Each ISM Code Element

Day 2: Designated Person Ashore, Master Authority and Crewing Resources

- Designated Person Ashore Duties: Safety Monitoring, Resource Assurance and Direct Access to Top Management
- DPA Qualification, Training and Experience Criteria From IMO ISM Guidance
- Master Responsibility Statement and Overriding Authority Wording in the SMS Manual
- Manning, Seafarer Certification and Ship-Specific Familiarisation Checklists
- Training Needs Matrix and Working Language Communication Arrangements on Board

Day 3: Shipboard Operations, Emergency Preparedness and Planned Maintenance

- Key Shipboard Operations Procedures: Navigation, Cargo, Bunkering and Mooring Checklists
- Shipboard Contingency Plans, Drill Matrix and Muster List Verification
- Planned Maintenance System for Critical Equipment and Stand-By Systems Testing
- SMS Document Control: Manual Revision, Obsolete Copy Removal and Onboard Records
- Shipboard Operation Risk Assessment and Permit-to-Work Integration in the SMS

Day 4: Non-Conformity Reporting, Audits and Certification Readiness

- Non-Conformity, Accident and Near-Miss Reporting: Report Forms, Root Cause and Corrective Action Tracking
- Internal ISM Audit Programme: Audit Frequency, Auditor Independence and Evidence Sampling
- Company Verification, Master SMS Review and Annual Management Review Inputs
- DOC and SMC Certification Cycle: Interim, Initial, Annual, Intermediate and Renewal Audits by Flag or Class
- Major Non-Conformity Triggers, Just Culture and SMS Effectiveness Indicators

Day 5: Case Fleet SMS Gap Assessment and Internal Audit Plan

- Case Fleet Document Review: SMS Manual, DPA Records and Master Review Reports
- Case Study: Tracing a Grounding Near Miss From Report to Corrective Action Close-Out
- Mock Internal Audit Interview With a Master and Chief Engineer Using Audit Checklists
- SMS Gap Scoring Against ISM Code Elements and Corrective Action Priority Ranking
- SMS Gap Assessment and Internal Audit Plan Build and Peer Challenge

Skills You Will Gain:

- ISM Code Requirement Mapping
- DPA Safety Monitoring
- Master Authority Documentation
- Drill and Contingency Planning
- Critical Equipment Maintenance Control
- Non-Conformity Root Cause Analysis
- ISM Internal Auditing
- Certification Audit Preparation

Why Attend This Course:

- Leave with an SMS Gap Assessment and Internal Audit Plan that can be adapted to your own fleet and offices
- Test your DPA escalation route and master review process against a realistic case fleet before the next certification audit
- Practise audit interviews and evidence sampling with peers who run safety management systems on tankers, bulk carriers, offshore and passenger ships
- Return able to explain to top management which SMS weaknesses carry the highest risk of a major non-conformity

Conclusion:

An ISM Code safety management system protects ships and crews only when the documented procedures, the DPA, the master and the audit programme work as one loop. The week moves from the Code purpose, SOLAS chapter IX and company policy, through the DPA role, master authority and crewing resources, to shipboard operations, drills, maintenance and document control, then to non-conformity reporting, internal audits, management review and DOC and SMC certification. The final day applies each method to a case fleet and produces an SMS Gap Assessment and Internal Audit Plan.